

# FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

## Photograph



Photo 1. Façade (west) elevation.

## Locus Map (north is at top)



Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

97-70

Marblehead  
N

BEV.1223

**Town/City:** Beverly

**Place:** (*neighborhood or village*):  
Centerville

**Address:** 595 Essex Street

**Historic Name:** North Shore Indoor Tennis Club/  
The Indoor Court Inc.

**Uses:** Present: tennis club

Original: tennis club

**Date of Construction:** ca. 1929-1934

**Source:** articles of organization; city directories

**Style/Form:** Moderne - Functional

**Architect/Builder:** Gavin Hadden, engineer; James  
Hampden Robb, supervising archtt

### Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: brick, corrugated metal, fiberglass panels;  
concrete trim

Roof: membrane

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**  
none

### Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Replacement of arched sections of building enclosure with  
metal and translucent fiberglass panels (2014)

**Condition:** good

**Moved:** no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

**Acreage:** 0.5

**Setting:** Located on east side of Essex Street, a main  
thoroughfare between Beverly and Wenham. Surrounding  
development is mostly small-scale, residential construction  
from the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Recorded by:** Wendy Frontiero and Martha Lyon

**Organization:** Beverly Historic District Commission

**Date** (*month / year*): February 2019

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

BEVERLY

595 ESSEX STREET

## MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Area(s) Form No.

BEV.1223

☒ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

*If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

*Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.*

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

*Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.*

The North Shore Indoor Tennis Club building occupies a rectangular lot on the east side of Essex Street, near the corner of Essex Avenue. While the building stands on a slight berm, the lot is generally flat and maintained chiefly in lawn. Trees and shrubs line the side property lines, and a variety of chain link and vertical board fences encloses the rear portion of the property. A small, trapezoidal, paved parking area occupies most of the front setback. Concrete steps and a concrete walkway extend from the northern end of the parking area across the north end of the site and around the east side of the building to the main entrance on the back (east) elevation. The building consists of a large rectangular main block with a shallow rectangular projection centered on its rear elevation. The main block encloses an indoor tennis court; the rear projection is occupied by locker rooms and a small sitting area.

The main block contains an open interior volume within a monumental vaulted roof. Its one-story base is clad with Flemish bond brick with projecting end bays, brick pilasters defining the middle bays, a plain concrete fascia band at the top, and a projecting wood cornice. The arched sections of the front (west) and rear (east) elevations have corrugated metal sheathing, translucent glazed panels, a wide band of sheet metal trim on the arc of the steel framing, and copper-clad fascia at the roof edge. A brick chimney is centered on the exterior of the rear elevation of the main block.

The symmetrical west (street-side) elevation contains nine bays marked by brick pilasters on the brick base; the outer bays project and have a narrow flat roof. The center entrance bay has an arched top and a slightly recessed entrance with a header brick lintel; double-leaf, flush doors; and a semi-circular fanlight. The third and seventh bays each contain a rectangular opening with a header course lintel and single-leaf, flush door.

The symmetrical north and south (side) elevations each feature three bays separated by shallow brick pilasters. The bases of four structural-steel arches emerge from the brick walls and are anchored to poured concrete abutments. Centered within each bay of the brick wall is a long, low, horizontal opening filled with two rows of pre-cast concrete blocks having a decorative open pattern.

The façade (rear) elevation of the vaulted main block is distinguished by the chimney rising up the center. A loading-dock-type door occupies the penultimate bay of the north end of this block. Spanning the center five bays is a one-story, rectangular projection with brick cladding, laid in Flemish bond, and a flat roof ringed by a parapet with a copper coping. Two single, 6/6 double-hung wood sash are symmetrically arranged on both the north and south elevations of the projection. The arched center bay of the east façade contains an entrance featuring a recessed, arched doorway with a header-brick lintel and a paneled wood door framed by three-quarter height sidelights and a fanlight. Centered above the doorway is a large roundel occupied by a bas-relief of a tennis ball. Poured concrete steps with a plain metal picket railing access the entrance. The entrance bay is flanked on each side by a single 6/6 window; the end bays are each occupied by a tri-partite window unit consisting of a 6/6 window flanked by 4/4 windows. The windows of the projection have concrete sills and no lintel treatment.

The interior of the main block contains a single tennis court with a modern composite playing surface (originally clay), a 40-foot tall ceiling over the net, exposed brick walls, and a small metal balcony on the east (interior) wall. The one-story projection contains a foyer and small kitchen in the middle, flanked by a men's locker room on the south and women's locker room on the north. A sitting area in the center of this volume (originally described as a card room) is illuminated by a large skylight. A center fireplace on its inner (west) wall is flanked by a pair of compact bay windows, which project into the main block and allow views of play on the tennis court beyond.

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Well preserved, the North Shore Indoor Tennis Club is a unique building type in Beverly, a rare example of recreational architecture on the North Shore and in the Boston area, and a remarkable example of early 20th century structural steel construction. Notable features include the one-story brick base with spare classical detailing; the muscular, exposed ends of the steel arches on the side elevations; cast concrete block window infill; fan-lighted entrances; and the whimsical tennis-ball ornament over the main entrance. The arched portions of the west and east elevations originally were entirely glazed; the recent introduction of metal panels reduces the visual impact of the original design.

### HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

*Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.*

The North Shore Indoor Tennis Club building was constructed between 1929, when The Indoor Court, Inc. was organized, and 1934, when the facility first appears in the city directories. The AIA directory listing for architect James Hampden Robb reports that the building was constructed in 1929-1930. (The property is called the North Shore Indoor Tennis Club in early directories; its formal and presently-used name is The Indoor Court, Inc.)

In 1907, the land was part of the Stephen P. Hathaway Estate; by 1919, the property was subdivided into small numbered lots, and Essex Avenue, Hathaway Avenue, and Forest Street were laid out and named. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Stephen A. D. Edwards operated a cider mill in the vicinity and also worked as a contractor and real estate developer. The 1930 city directory calls Edwards a general contractor engaged in masonry, excavating and grading; in that year, he advertised "House and Cottage Lots For Sale" in a development he called Hathaway's Park. The planned development seems to have been postponed for several decades, however. Directories show that the modest Victorian cottage located at the corner of Essex Avenue and Essex Street (603 Essex Street), now adjacent to the tennis court, was occupied in 1929 by Richard H. and Agnes Curry, who operated Larchmere Kennels on the property.

The Indoor Court, Inc. was organized in August 1929 and is believed to have constructed this building shortly thereafter. In 1934, the North Shore Indoor Tennis Club made its first appearance in the city directories, with Richard Curry, who was still living at 603 Essex Street, described as its caretaker. In 1935, the Chamber of Commerce extolled the city's recreational attractions as including "One fine golf course with five others located in the suburban area. Indoor tennis court as well as the splendid golf and tennis courts of the United Shoe Machinery Club House." (1935 directory: 120) Curry continued as caretaker at least through 1935. By 1938, Robert Young was listed as superintendent of the facility; by 1948, the position was occupied by Francis Courchene. No superintendent is listed for the club in 1960 and 1969.

According to its Articles of Organization, The Indoor Court, Inc. was established "for the purpose of encouraging athletic exercises and especially for the establishment and maintenance of an indoor tennis court in the City of Beverly and of a place for social meetings in connection therewith." The founding meeting occurred at the home of Quincy Adams Shaw, 2<sup>nd</sup>, in Beverly. Initial officers were Anne Steward of Topsfield, president; her husband, Gilbert L. Steward of Topsfield, treasurer; and J. Hampden Robb of Beverly, secretary. Other founding directors included Bayard Warren of Beverly, Phyllis S. Tuckerman of Hamilton, and Philip Stockton of Manchester, Mass. The names of William Endicott of Boston and Quincy A. Shaw, 2<sup>nd</sup> of Prides Crossing were originally typed in the form as subscribers, but for unknown reasons were crossed out. Quincy A. Shaw 2<sup>nd</sup> (1869-1960) was a member of a prominent and very wealthy Boston family, his obituary records that he was president of North American Mines, Inc., and of the Calumet & Hecla Consolidated Copper Company, and that he was an accomplished tennis player. Further research is required to establish whether this Shaw was the Q. A. Shaw associated with the Gurney Estate at 14 Greenwood Ave. (BEV.489) and/or the Charles G. Loring House (1881-1884) at 431 Hale Street (BEV.491).

Funding for the \$70,000 construction of the building was provided by twelve men. In addition to founding directors Robb, Q. A. Shaw 2d, Steward, Tuckerman, and Warren, these included Rudolphe L. Agassiz, T. Jefferson Coolidge, William Endicott, Q. A. Shaw McKean, Dudley L. Pickman, and Neil W. Rice. The board of directors and benefactors were members of affluent, elite families, most of whom summered on the North Shore (in Beverly Farms and Prides Crossing, Hamilton, Manchester, Topsfield, and Wenham) and had winter homes in Boston. They were leading businessmen, bankers, investors, and industrialists; many were interconnected professionally and genealogically.

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A contemporary description of the indoor tennis court reports that "It is a compact community project and the new building is expected to prove a popular meeting place for those who are lawn tennis enthusiasts." (Unattributed newspaper/magazine article). At the time, tennis was a popular sport among the high society of Boston and the North Shore. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, America was dramatically transformed by industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. Concurrently, both leisure time and disposable income increased, and new attention was paid to health and recreation. Sports became available to both the elite and the middle and working classes, and appealed to the cultural ideals of the pastoral landscape, individualism, and democracy. In the Boston area, The Country Club was founded in Brookline in 1882 (offering equestrian activities, golf, and tennis), and the Tennis and Racquet Club was constructed in the Back Bay neighborhood of Boston in 1902. Sporting clubs were also common on the North Shore, evidenced in the nearby Myopia Hunt Club (established in Hamilton in 1879, including fox hunting, polo, and tennis), the Essex County Club in Manchester (1893; offering golf and tennis), Kernwood Country Club in Salem (1914; golf), the Montserrat Golf Club in Beverly (1902, BEV.516; golf and tennis), and the United Shoe Machinery Corporation Clubhouse (a.k.a. Beverly Golf and Tennis Club, 1910, BEV.264; golf and tennis).

One of the founding members of the Indoor Tennis Court, Inc., J. (James) Hampden Robb, is described as the supervising architect for the building in the AIA's *American Architects Directory*, which lists the construction date as 1929-1930. The design is credited to Gavin Hadden, a civil engineer based in New York, "who believes that the Beverly court is the forerunner of many in frigid climes." (Unattributed newspaper/magazine article) An almost identical tennis court building was constructed at The Country Club in Brookline, Mass., in 1929, also designed by Gavin Hadden, with an associate, Mr. C. A. Holden. The Brookline tennis court building differs from Beverly's in containing two indoor courts beneath six steel arches, but displays the same pilastered brick base and glazing under a semi-circular roof. A contemporary lawn tennis magazine extolled the virtues of the Brookline building as follows:

"The skillful blending of materials and colors, each selected with careful attention to utility and purpose, gives the exterior a pleasing appearance of simplicity and suitability. Here we find no deception in design: the major structural elements are frankly revealed... When the visitor enters the building[,] he is at once impressed by its light and airy spaciousness, its business-like neatness and simplicity. The reasons for the unusual form of the roof soon become apparent. The curved ceiling with its clean and simple surfaces gives the players a glorious sense of freedom and unlimited headroom." (*American Lawn Tennis*: 62).

Architect J. Hampden Robb (1898-1987) graduated from Harvard and studied at Columbia University's School of Architecture. He worked first for the eminent Boston firm of Bigelow & Wadsworth, was later associated with the firm of William T. Aldrich, and was principal in his own firms beginning in 1933. Robb's practice included numerous residences on the North Shore and in Boston (including one for fellow tennis club founder Gilbert L. Steward in Topsfield). He was also consulting architect for the Shore Country Day School in Beverly for seven years. Robb served as president of the Boston Society of Architects from 1955-1957.

Engineer Gavin Hadden (1888-1956) also received degrees from Harvard (undergraduate) and Columbia University (civil engineering). After serving as an engineer in Europe during World War I, Hadden opened his own practice in New York City; projects included college stadiums at Cornell, Brown, and Northwestern. From 1940 until his death, Hadden worked as a civilian employee of the Army Corps of Engineers; he was involved in the Manhattan Project during World War II and became its official historian.

The Indoor Court, Inc. presently has about 60 members. The official playing season is October through May, although the courts are also available in the summer.

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## SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



Photo 2. South and east (rear) elevations.



Photo 3. Main entrance, east elevation.

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## National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- ☒ Individually eligible ☐ Eligible **only** in a historic district  
☐ Contributing to a potential historic district ☐ Potential historic district

Criteria: ☒ **A** ☐ **B** ☒ **C** ☐ **D**

Criteria Considerations: ☐ **A** ☐ **B** ☐ **C** ☐ **D** ☐ **E** ☐ **F** ☐ **G**

Statement of Significance by Wendy Frontiero

*The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.*

The North Shore Indoor Tennis Club is historically significant for its associations with the summer resort culture of Beverly's Gold Coast and the proliferation of grand summer estates throughout the North Shore. Well preserved, the property represents a unique building type in Beverly, a rare and early example of recreational architecture on the North Shore and in the Boston area, and a remarkable example of early 20th century structural steel construction. Notable features include the one-story brick base with spare classical detailing; the muscular, exposed ends of its steel arches on the side elevations; cast concrete block window infill; fan-lighted entrances; and the whimsical tennis-ball ornament over the main entrance.

Retaining integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, the North Shore Indoor Tennis Club is recommended for National Register listing with significance at the local level.